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Senate approves Cropsey's identity theft protection effort

Lansing — The Senate Wednesday overwhelmingly passed a broad effort to stop the explosion of identity theft in Michigan and help victims get their good credit back, Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt) announced.

“As we enter the holiday shopping season, Michigan consumers should know state leaders have made protecting their credit histories a top priority,” Cropsey said. “And identity thieves should know police and prosecutors will be better able to get them.”

In 2002 alone, more than 160,000 people — 4,640 in Michigan — reported having their identity stolen to the Federal Trade Commission. Hundreds of thousands of people each year are estimated to be victims.

Cropsey sponsored Senate Bill 803, which extends the statute of limitations regarding ID theft crimes.

Key parts of the package would:

- Prohibit denying or reducing credit to ID theft victims.
- Stop soliciting or extending credit to consumers by mailing unsolicited checks and similar items.
- Give police and prosecutors the power to open criminal investigations and bring cases in the jurisdiction where the victim resides or where the crime was committed.

(More)

- Create a standardized certificate ID theft victims can use to prove their identity has been used for fraudulent purposes so they can restore their credit histories more quickly.
- Stop individuals, companies, government organizations, including schools and universities, or other legal entities from disclosing to a third-party or publicly displaying the Social Security number of a person unless that person consents or the disclosure is authorized by law.

During committee hearings, victims told senators how they had their personal information taken and used to open fraudulent loan, credit card and cell phone accounts.

In one man's case, he was left to pay back thousands of dollars in loans and still has problems with his credit cards despite how he proved conclusively years ago that he wasn't responsible for the charges. Other victims reported problems in getting police to investigate such crimes because existing state law doesn't make clear which police agencies have jurisdiction.

The identity theft package approved today comprises SB 220, 657, 792-795, 797, 798 and 803. It now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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